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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

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Writing test rate improves

A clear improvement has been seen in the success rate among students taking the University Writing Test

At the first session held in November 1983, only 37.3% of the students passed the test; 52.8% passed the second session in January 1984; 51% passed in March 1984; and 60% passed the fourth session this past October.

The trend at Concordia is comparable to that experienced by other universities in Canada which offer a similar language of competency test. For example, the University of British Coloumbia now has a 60% success rate compared to 30% in 1980 when it first began testing. Nine years ago, the University of Waterloo recorded a 45% failure rate: it now stands at 9%. And University of Toronto also has a 9 to 11% failure rate. (testing there began in 1981).

Student population in these other institutions is mainly anglophone; Concordia clientèle is approximately 20% francophone. Of a total of 346 candidates who took the test in the fall, there were 285 English-speaking and 61 French-speaking students. Fifty-three per cent of the English-speaking students passed while 91% of the French-speaking students passed. Students can take the test in French or English.

According to Hill (Professor Harry Hill was the main architect of the Written Competency Test some two years ago), one possible explanation for the higher success rate among francophones is the fact that the francophone students speak two languages and this may help them master their mother tongue. "But this is only a theory, since we don't collect any information on the students' background," Hill added.

A forthcoming issue of the UWT will deal with the timing of when a student elects to take the test. For now, students are encouraged to take the test as soon as possible after entering the University. In the future, new regulations may make the UWT compulsory in the first year or before completion of the first 30 credits. A policy review is slated for the end of the academic year.

Concordia University was the first University in Quebec to implement an examination for competence in written expression (October 29, 1982) for all students as a prerequisite to graduation. Among those schools in Canada which have language of competency tests are the University of Waterloo, the University of Toronto, the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta.

-30-

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